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LAKE-TRAVEL BY DOG-SLEDGE.

By H. M. Robinson

I.

A MEMORY which refuses to associate with ordinary remembrances, and has an odd preference for the company of sportive and incongruous dreams, is that of a certain consular gentleman, of extremely pedantic bearing, careering wildly over a frozen Northern prairie in a dog-sledge. He was the proprietor and determined wearer of the only silk hat within a radius of four hundred miles, and still adhered to the use of a shawl as an outer covering long years after it had ceased to be employed as an article of wear. Added to this was an irreproachable suit of black broadcloth, the like of which was not to be encountered within the same radius, and a pair of tight boots, that would have frozen the feet of a half-breed runner. In this civilized apparel he was essaying his first ride in a dog-sledge, and a more incongruous spectacle it has never been my lot to behold.

Seated in a cariole resembling in shape a heel-less shoe, the unfortunate gentleman was whirling over the drifted plain in rapid but tortuous course. Having, in the confidence of perfect ignorance, refused the proffered services of a driver, lest he should excite ridicule by being guarded and guided like an infant in a baby-cab, he was now reaping the fruits of his rashness in a series of the most remarkable gyrations of which the human body is capable. The dogs being unacquainted with the language of their freight, and evidently animated by the spirit of evil, wandered at their own sweet will over the snow-covered plain; their will generally prompting them to plunge headlong into every drift, or to skirt the steep sides of the long ridges. Under these depressing circumstances, it behoved the neophyte to use his utmost endeavor to retain an upright position, in order to avoid a sledge-ride in which his own body

would be used as the runners, and the cariole assume the place of passenger. Being limited by the construction of the sledge to the use of his hands alone, hitherto employed in holding his shawl, he was forced to drop that favorite covering in order that, by swaying rapidly from side to side and plunging his hands in the snow, he might right the sledge. This continuous seesaw, and the crowning incongruity of the silk hat, gave him at length the appearance of a jumping-jack, or "the gentleman in black," as he starts suddenly from the box and swings pendulous from side to side. His frantic shouts of "Whoa!" availed nothing; the dogs, having been sent out to give their passenger a ride, were evidently bent upon doing it, and wandered vaguely about on the drifting snow. At length, a more than usually vertical drift being reached, the tired arms gave out, and the cariole, left without support, poised a moment in mid-air, then turned over, leaving the recumbent *voyageur* with his legs still fastened to the sledge, but with arms thrust deep into the snow and head calmly pillowed in the depths of his hat. From this position he was powerless to move, except at the will of the dogs, who had now faced about in their harness, and seated themselves to gaze imperturbably upon the wreck. The spectacle of this representative of a higher civilization, lying stranded upon a thin board in a limitless ocean of snow, proved too much for half-breed courtesy; and there he lay until the owner of the cariole had sufficiently recovered from successive convulsions of laughter to run to his assistance.

A determination to avoid a like experience led the writer, some time afterward, before undertaking a winter's journey across the frozen expanse of Lake Winnipeg, to pursue a little judicious training, surreptitiously undergone upon an unfrequented by-road, before even attempting to decide upon the merits of the various teams presented for that service.

II.

To begin my journey, I purchased a board about nine feet long and sixteen inches wide, which was duly steamed and turned up at one end. To it wooden bows were fastened, while over it was stretched a stout covering of raw-hide. This accomplished, the board resembled the front of a slipper. To complete the likeness, a heel-top was made by attaching an upright back about two feet from the rear end, and extending the raw-hide covering to it. Then the shoe was submitted to an Indian friend, who decorated its outer surface with mystical emblems in red and yellow pigments, covering the whole with a coating of oil. When the motive power was furnished, the ship would be ready to sail.

The selection of the propelling force was more difficult of accomplishment. Dogs of high and low degree were brought for inspection; for dogs in the North have but one occupation—to haul. From the Esquimaux down through all the stages of canine life to the Indian mongrel, all are alike doomed to labor before a sledge of some kind during the winter months; all are destined to howl under the beatings of a brutal driver; to tug wildly at the moose-skin collar; to haul until they can haul no longer, and then to die. When I look back at the long line of seared and whip-marked heads, whose owners were put through their best paces in demonstration of their perfect fitness for the work, what a host of sadly-resigned faces rises up before me! There were heads lacking an ear, an eye; heads bearing the marks of blows with sticks, whips, the heels of boots; heads that had been held down and beaten out of all semblance of life; and heads yet all bleeding and torn with the brutal lashings thought necessary to impart an air of liveliness before a probable purchaser! The same retrospect brings up the hybrid drivers of those dogs, upon the majority of whose countenances a painful indifference to suffering and an inherent brutality were plainly visible—dusky, athletic fellows, whose only method of dealing with the poor dog, who gave up everything in life for him, was by blows and fierce invective.

For a time all teams submitted for inspection seemed wanting in some essential quality. At length, however, my prospective driver informed me of a half-breed acquaintance who was the possessor of a team which he thought would answer the purpose. His mongrel friend resided sixty miles away; but distance and time go for naught in the North—in fact, are about the only possessions with which the inhabitants are plentifully endowed; so we compassed the space and purchased the dogs. There were four of them—long-haired, clean-legged, fox-headed animals, with more the appearance of wolves than of dogs. With them came four sets of harness, each set having a tinkling row of bells in its back-band, which, being of different tones, rang a merry chime as their wearers trotted briskly along. This completed the passenger accommodation; now for the baggage-van.

Another board, ten feet in length and fourteen inches wide, was purchased, steamed, and turned up

at one end. But, instead of the raw-hide covering, shoe-latches were inserted in the outer edges of the board, which would tie down tightly to its surface the load of provision, bedding, and camp-equipment, necessary for the journey. For this sledge the motive power was selected less critically; strength was the requisite, not symmetry; so dogs of strong sinew and large bone were chosen, regardless of looks. For provision, we had pemmican—the pounded dried meat of the buffalo mingled with fat—and black tea; the dogs had frozen white-fish.

My driver was a heathen Cree. He was, moreover, a linguist, speaking several aboriginal dialects and a kind of mongrel French. Five golden sovereigns constituted the bond of union between us. He was a lank, muscular man, the bones of whose huge frame stood out conspicuous at the joints and angles, and the muscles showed distinctly in his gaunt meagreness. He had yellow paint on his face, and was arrayed in rather bewildering apparel. His head-gear was the luxuriant *chevelure* with which Nature had endowed him. On his feet he wore moccasins; on his limbs he wore leggings, which extended only a certain way above the knee, leaving that Providence which "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" a dreary waste of yellow-mottled skin upon which to experiment; on his body he wore a cotton shirt perennially innocent of soap. Attached to this shirt, and stretched straight and taut across the pit of his stomach, he wore a brass watch-chain. Over all, like the mantle of Charity, was strapped a green blanket. Thus attired, he resembled a settled melancholy, or a god of bile from a dyspeptic's *inferno*. Nevertheless, he could travel from forty to sixty miles a day, running alongside the sledge.

III.

It was the 10th of December when we left Fort Garry, bound down the Red River of the North, across the frozen length of Lake Winnipeg, to Norway House, at its northern extremity. There started with us the four dog-trains and two drivers which constitute the Great Northern Packet of the Hudson's Bay Company, and which, with its connecting links, scatters news over all that vast region lying between the forty-ninth and sixty-seventh parallels of latitude, in North America, and reaching east and west from Labrador to Alaska. Our route being the same, we joined company with the hybrid Mercuries, and began our journey amid much cracking of whips, howling of dogs, and profanity discreetly veiled by delivery in the heathen tongues.

To the novice the spectacle presented by a number of gayly-accounted dog-trains gliding merrily by is a cheerful one. The tiny bells keeping time to the foot-falls of the shaggy train; the cariole fantastically decorated in bright, warm colors; the passenger cozily wrapped in furs and woollens of shades suggestive of warmth and comfort; the active driver trotting unweariedly alongside, until the sledge with all its belongings becomes a mere speck of black upon the limitless expanse of snow—all conspire to commend dog-sledging to the transient spectator as

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the ideal of winter travel, the veritable poetry of motion. The swan-like motion of the sledge as its thin bottom yields in graceful curves and undulations to adapt itself to inequalities of surface beneath it is strangely suggestive of the progress of a canoe over waters faintly ruffled by a passing breeze. To lie in such a cradle, and be gently rocked over a varying landscape hour after hour, would seem an idyllic life in which satiety could never come. But, suppose the cold to be of that intensity which it is neither possible to picture nor describe; of that degree in which, after having spoken of the whip-handle which burns the hand that touches it, the tea that freezes while it is being drunk; in which an instant's exposure of the face leaves the cheek or the classical nose upon which one prides himself white and rigid as a piece of marble; in which the traveler, with head bowed to meet the crushing blast, goes wearily on, as silent as the river and forests through which he rides, and from whose rigid bosom no sound ever comes, no ripple ever breaks, no bird, no beast, no human face appears—a cold of which, having said all this, there is a sense of utter inability to convey any adequate idea, except that it means sure and certain death, with calm and peaceful face turned up to the sky, and form hard and unimpressible as if carved from granite, within a period whose duration would expire in the few hours of a winter's daylight if there were no fire or means of making it upon the track.

Suppose, too, that the gently-undulating motion of the sledge, in accommodating itself to the inequalities of the frozen surface, which seemed so suggestive of a canoe floating cork-like upon rippling water, felt, now that one is seated in the sledge, like being dragged over a gravel-walk upon a sheet; or that the track has been completely snowed up, and the wretched dogs are unequal to the emergency. Mistatim, the leader, is willing, but young, thin, and weak; the middle one, Shoathinga, is aged and asthmatic; and the shafter, Kuskitaostiquarn, lame and lethargic. From morning till night the air resounds with howling and the cries of the drivers anathematizing Shoathinga and Kuskitaostiquarn. The sledges constantly upset from running against a stump or slipping over a hillside; and, when one hauls and strains to right them, the dogs lie quietly down, looking round at him, and not offering to pull an ounce to help. When the driver, aggravated beyond endurance, rushes up, stick in hand, and bent on punishment, they make frantic exertions, which only render matters worse, resuming their quiescent attitude the moment he returns again to haul at the sleigh; and all this time, perhaps, the unfortunate passenger lies, bound and helpless, half buried in the snow. Under these conditions the scene changes, and the envious spectator of the poetry of motion retires with more sympathy for those old *voyageurs* of the fur-trade who used to pay stipulated sums to the happy inventors of new and strange oaths.

IV.

THE fall of snow on land being insufficient for sledding-purposes, we followed the frozen channel

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of the river as a track, the six trains gliding smoothly over the first stage of their journey. Harnessed in tandem fashion, one after another, the twenty-four dogs and accompanying sledges formed a long line, and presented a gallant spectacle. Four dogs to each sled form a complete train as used in the Northern country, and are harnessed to the cariole by means of two long traces. Between these traces the dogs stand one after the other, with a space intervening between them of perhaps a foot. A round collar, passing over the head and ears and fitting closely to the shoulder, buckles on each side to the traces, which are supported by a back-band of leather. This back-band is generally covered with tiny bells, the collar being hung with those of larger size, and decorated with party-colored ribbons or fox-tails. In no single article of property, perhaps, is greater pride taken than in a train of dogs turned out in good style; and the undue amount of beads, bells, and ribbons, frequently employed to bedizen the poor brutes, produces the most comical effect when placed upon some terror-stricken dog, who, when first put into harness, usually looks the picture of fear.

The dogs composing our teams, however, were all accustomed to the work, and bore their honors bravely. Fresh from a long rest, they trotted gayly along, affording their drivers but little pretext for blows or imprecation in the breath-taking pace they attained. True, the gaunt Cree dealt Whiskey a merciless flick, from time to time, and urged upon Brandy the necessity of minding his eye; but I fancy it was owing more to a desire to keep his hand in play, and his vocabulary of invective in memory, than from any defect in their work. Nevertheless, such casual and indifferently-bestowed abuse revealed the fact that, of the eight animals who were doing their best, individually and collectively, to haul me and my baggage over that waste of ice, five rejoiced in the names of Brandy and Whiskey, while the remaining three distributed Coffee and Chocolat between them. This knowledge was a blow under which I reeled. An apostle of temperance sweeping past lonely dwellings, and dashing with a wild scurry through Indian camps, shrieking for strong drink, and followed by a wild retainer opposing his demands with suggestions of coffee and chocolate, would likely convey to the startled dwellers on the plain the idea of a migratory delirium tremens, or a peripatetic advertisement of "The Bar-tender's Own Book." Upon inquiry, however, my misery was found to have abundant company; for, of the sixteen dogs attached to the packet-trains, no fewer than eleven reveled in an alcoholic nomenclature. The reasons assigned by the drivers for so general use of spirituous appellations was, that the mere sound of these names was suggestive of warmth, comfort, and good cheer; from which the wearied driver doubtless derived a satisfaction equal to washing

"... his hands with invisible soap,
In imperceptible water."

Still, upon second thought, it may be held that, as certain colors are suggestive of warmth and comfort—a stove painted red about the base oftentimes de-

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ludes the casual visitor with the idea of heat—so may the influence of certain names be productive of a like genial effect upon the imagination. However it may be, I know that if such nomenclature be adopted without well-founded reason on the part of the dog-driver, it is the only thing in the many curious phases of his life that is so accepted. Not a thread in the web of his existence but has its use.

V.

TWENTY miles below our point of departure, and perched upon the lofty and precipitous bluffs of the river, we caught sight of one of those impossible pictures of mediæval fortification which so often adorn the lids of snuff-boxes, or the pages of ancient albums. There were the same peaked roofs and turrets, the same bleak view of unadorned stone-wall, with bastions, ramparts, gates, and all, as in the original. But no plumed knight or trusty squire issued from its portals, nor double-handed sword or glittering armor decked its halls. It was the abode of Dives, and Dives trades in beads and gilt, in furs and tobacco, in cattle and calico. As a company's trading-post it proved a somewhat extensive collection of residences, shops, and stores. These were all inclosed within a stone-wall, pierced throughout its entire circuit with loop-holes, so arranged as to suggest the inquiry whether, in the extremely improbable event of the place being besieged, they would present greater facilities to the defenders of the establishment, or to the assailants in firing through them at the garrison within.

The banks hereabouts were high and densely wooded. Some miles below, however, the woods disappeared, and the banks, which gradually sank to a lower level, were covered with long, reedy grass. Indian tents, surrounded even at that late season by nets hung up to dry, indicated the pursuits of their owners. The stream, after reaching the low country, split into numerous channels, through several of which its waters found their way into Lake Winnipeg.

At the outlet of the main channel our sledges were run ashore. The bank here was a long strip of shingle running out into the lake, the frozen waters of which extended northward out of sight. We had accomplished over forty miles; the night was closing in, and this was the last available camping-place before setting out upon the long stretches from islet to islet, or point to point, of the lake's shore. So the drivers loosed their dogs, and proceeded to gather drift-wood for the night. The twenty-four dogs, meanwhile, surveyed each other grimly, discovered points of etiquette upon which they could not agree, and fell into a general fight, threatening disastrous consequences until the loaded whip-stocks of the men separated them.

The snow having been cleared away by the aid of a snow-shoe used as a shovel, and our own supper prepared and eaten, we turned our attention to the dogs who had borne the burden if not the heat of the day; for the sledge-dog's day is one long tissue of trial. Put to a task from which his whole nature revolts, he is driven to the violation of every

instinct by the continual lashings of a driver's whip. Before Night has lifted her sable mantle to shroud the stars, the sledge-dog has his slumbers rudely broken by the summons of his master. Close by the camp, under the protecting lee of stump or fallen tree, he has lain coiled in the roundest of balls during the night. Perhaps, if his lines are cast in pleasant places, he has encroached upon his driver's blanket, and contributed his vital heat to the comfort of that merciless functionary. Perhaps, too, the fast-falling flakes of the snow-storm have covered him in their soft folds, adding to his sense of warmth, and revealing his presence only in the shape of a rounded hillock of snow. He may, perchance, dream the dreams of peace and comfort, or imagine that his soft covering will render him undistinguishable from the surrounding mass of white; to be awakened from his delusion by blow of whip-stock, a kick of the driver's foot, and the stern command to find his place in the gaudy gear of moose-skin and bells awaiting him—an ornamented and bedizened harness that mocks the pathos of his whip-marked face and trembling figure. Then comes the start. The wooded copse is left behind, and under the incipient dawn he plods along through the snow. The sleepy driver seeks to dissipate the morning cold by rapid motion, and mercilessly urges the dog to his utmost effort. The crisp air resounds with the crack of his whip and the echoes of his dire imprecation. The dog, not yet nerved to his uncongenial labor, cunningly takes every advantage to shirk, refusing to pull when it is most required, and showing wonderful speed and alacrity, rushing off with the heavy sledge when the distracted driver comes near to punish. The day dawns, sun rises, morning merges into mid-day, and it is time to halt for a dinner in which the hauling-dog cannot share; then on again in Indian file, as before. If there be no path in the snow, the driver travels before to beat one with his snow-shoes, and the "foregoer," or leading-dog, follows close behind. But if there be a track, however faint, the animal follows it himself; and, when lost to sight by wrack and drift of tempest, his sense of smell enables him to keep it straight. Thus through the short hours of the winter's day they travel on, in withered woods through which the wind howls and shrieks, or on the endless expanse of snow, the glare of whose unsullied whiteness blinds the vision of the lake-traveler; through solitudes which, save when the occasional dog-sledge with its peals of bells in winter, or the swiftly-passing boat-brigade resonant with the songs of the summer *voyageurs*, intrudes, with its momentary variation, upon the shriek of the all-penetrating wind, the ripple of the stream, the roar of the thunder-toned waterfall, or the howl of the wild beast of the woods, are abandoned to the undisturbed possession of the Indian hunter and his prey.

When the winter's day draws to a close, and the twilight landscape has warned the traveler to choose his resting-place for the night, the sledge-dog finds relief from his harness, and his day's work is at an end. His battered and disfigured face loses in some

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slight degree its rueful look, to assume an air of expectation. He stretches and rolls in the powdery snow, then lies down to watch the preparation of the evening meal, in faint hope that some meagre portion may slip from his master's hand, or be left a moment unguarded. Soon, however, his watch merges into unconsciousness, and he sleeps. But the termination of his master's meal, followed by the sound of the axe striking the block of pemmican, or the unloading of the frozen white-fish from the provision-sledge, at once awakens him to life and vigor. He leaps quickly up, an alert, vicious animal, with every instinct centred in an eager craving for food. In the plain-country a daily ration of two pounds of pemmican is thrown him; in the region of forest and stream, where fish forms the staple food, he receives two large white-fish raw. In his diet he prefers fish to meat, and betrays its superiority in his work. His one daily meal is soon dispatched: no pleasures of deglutition are his. A quick snap, followed by a moment's rapid munching, and the pemmican has disappeared; the same short snap, a few convulsive throes, and the frozen fish is bolted almost whole, and the wistful eyes turned up for more. Not finding it, he indulges in a season of growling and snapping at his fellows, then lies down out in the snow to sleep, or, perchance, to dream of that day, which never comes for him, when the whip shall be broken and hauling shall be no more. Thus he remains till morn, unless some old shafter, grim and gray, rising at midnight on his haunches, inaugurates a chorus to the skies; or a pack of wolves, seated like sentries in a huge circle about the camp, challenge him by quick barks to renew their hereditary feud.

VI.

THE preparations for repose were of the simplest description. As the wind swept down the lake from the north, our heads were placed in that quarter, with feet in dangerous proximity to the fire. On the summit of the heap of snow formed in digging out our camping-ground were placed, as a protection against the fierce blasts, the inverted dog-sledges, which assumed amid that dreary landscape the likeness of head-stones, marking our resting-place with a rude "Hic jacet." Descending into bed from the surface of the snow, and muffled in unlimited bedding, the sensation given by the surrounding banks and overhanging sledges was that of sleeping in a gigantic four-poster with a highly-decorated head-board. The three drivers lay close together, but for certain sanitary reasons their freight chose to form a single spoke in the wheel, and reclined at an angle of his own.

Sleep comes soon to the traveler in arctic winters; but a beautiful dream of a little maiden who was wont to disport upon my knees was rudely broken by a visible perception of peril—a consciousness of the hovering presence of evil. How to describe these feelings I know not; but, as, if the eyes of a watcher are steadily fixed upon the countenance of a sleeper for a certain length of time, the slumberer will certainly start up, awakened by the mysterious

magnetism of a recondite principle of clairvoyance, so it was that, with closed eyes and drowsed-up senses, an inward ability was conferred upon me to detect the presence of danger near me—to see, though sleep-blind, the formless shape of a mysterious horror crouching beside me. And, as if the peril that was my night-mate was of a nature to be quickened into fatal activity by any motion on my part, I felt in my very stupor the critical necessity of lying quite still; so that, when I at last awoke and felt that, as I lay with my face to the sky, there was a thick, heavy, shivering thing upon my chest, I stirred not, nor uttered a word of panic. Danger and fear may occasionally dull the sense and paralyze the faculties, but they more frequently sharpen both; and when I say that the whole of my chest and even the pit of my stomach were covered with the heavy proportions of the thing, its considerable size will be acknowledged. A cold sweat burst from every pore. I could hear the beating of my heart, and I felt, to my increased dismay, that the palsy of terror had begun to agitate my limbs. "It will wake," thought I, "and then all is over!"

At this juncture there sounded above my head a prolonged howl, caught up and reiterated in varying chorus by a circle of hoarse voices surrounding our couch. And upon this the thing rose up on my chest with a quick start, and joined the dismal refrain with a barytone of remarkable power; while the voice of my protecting Cree rang out in sudden anger: "Whiskey, marche! Sacre chien, passe partout!" and the warmth-seeking Whiskey shrank quickly from his living pedestal to join his brethren of the mystic circle on the snow above. Thus relieved from the weight of the sledge-dog, who had presumed upon a gentler nature to increase his own comfort, I peered cautiously up and beheld a scene the most grotesque.

Seated upon the highest inverted sledge, with a look of utter dejection and overpowering anguish of soul, sat the aged leader of a packet-train, lifting up his voice in a series of heart-rending howls in deep bass. Seated in a like manner at regular intervals about him, and forming a huge circle inclosing the camp, were the remaining twenty-three dogs, taking their cue from the leader, and joining the chorus in dismal tenor and rasping soprano. The weird melancholy of that howling brought a sense of utter loneliness and desolation. The echoes reverberated over the lake, and died away in mournful, wailing cadences on the night-wind. The isolation seemed to deepen, and become palpable. Above, the sky was spangled with such myriads of stars as are only seen in northern latitudes; around lay a dreary waste of grayish white, empty, desolate, and void of life; no sound save the dismal howling of the dogs. Soon, however, there was intermingled with it much heathen profanity and oburgation, delivered in various tongues. The chorus had awakened the drivers, who were endeavoring to quiet the dogs by imprecations, in order to avoid the necessity of rising and using the whip. "Brandy! Brandy! sacre démon!" "Coffee! ye ould sinner, pren' garde!" "Chocolat.

crapaud that ye aire, Chocolat!" "Whiskey! ah, sal-au-prix!" "Whiskey!" "Ah, Coffee! you will catch it presently!" "Capitaine! Mistatim!" "Brandy! 'cre démon!" Then followed an outburst of profanity, and a hasty, furious shout to the whole circle, resembling a call for mixed drinks which has had no equal since the "opening" of the first bar on the Pacific slope. All this, however, proved of no avail, and the distracted drivers were finally forced to leave their warm beds and grasp their whips, upon which the wretched animals darted off in agonies of fear.

VII.

THREE hours before dawn we arose and prepared for departure by eating a fat breakfast and swallowing a great many cups of tea. Then my uncivilized driver of dogs, who joined the second-sight of a weather-seer to his other accomplishments, took an inventory of the weather, and predicted a storm before nightfall. However, the morning was as favorable as one could wish, and, incased in robes and blankets, I slid into the shoe-like sledge and was off, the central figure of the six sledges and a herd of howling dogs and drivers. The point at which we had encamped became speedily undistinguishable among the low line of apparently exactly similar localities ranging along the low shore. On in the gray snow-light, with a fierce wind sweeping down the long reaches of the lake; nothing spoken, for such cold weather makes men silent, morose, and savage.

Lake-travel, though rapid, is exceedingly harassing on account of the winds which perpetually sweep over the ice plain of their frozen surface, intensifying even moderate cold to a painful degree. The ice is always rough, coated with snow of varying thickness, or drifted into hillocks and ridges, alternating with spots of glass-like smoothness, which are constantly upsetting the sledges. And this same upsetting, a trifling matter enough on shore, is likely to prove a serious annoyance where the hardness of the ice nearly breaks one's bones. The same hardness, too, increases the fatigue of sledge-travel, which at its best may be likened to sitting on a thin board dragged quickly over a newly-macadamized road. Then, too, the pedestrian on a frozen lake labors under peculiar disadvantages. Where the snow lies deeply, the crust gives way at each step, precipitating the driver to the bottom with a sudden jar; where it lies thinly on the surface, or is drifted away, the hardness of the ice injures even the practised *voyageurs*, causing swellings of the ankles and soles of the feet, and enlargement of the lower back sinews of the legs. Again, the winter traveler speedily discovers that very slight exercise induces copious perspiration, which, in the most momentary halt, gets cold upon the skin; in fact, in a high wind, the exposed side will appear frozen over, while the rest of the body is comparatively warm and comfortable. Once cold in this way, it is almost impossible to get warm again without the heat of fire, or the severest exercise; and, should the latter be adopted, it must perforce be continued until a camping-place is reached. Moreover, to a

strong man, there is something humiliating in being hauled about in a portable bed, like some feeble invalid, while the hardy *voyageurs* are maintaining their steady pace from hour to hour, day to day, or week to week; for fatigue seems with them an unknown word.

VIII.

TOWARD noon there were indications that the prophetic skill of my heathen driver was about to be verified. The wind still kept dead against us, and at times it was impossible to face its terrible keenness. So great was the drift that it obscured the little light afforded by the sun—which was very low in the heavens—through a cloudy atmosphere. The dogs began to tire out; the ice cut their feet, and the white surface was often dotted with the crimson icicles that fell from their bleeding toes. The four canines hauling the provision-sled turned back whenever opportunity presented, or faced about and sat shivering upon their haunches. Under these circumstances the anathemas of the Cree grew fearful to the ear; for, of all the qualifications requisite to the successful driving of dogs, none is more necessary than an ability to imprecate freely and with considerable variety in at least three different languages. But, whatever number of tongues be employed, one is absolutely indispensable to perfection in the art, and that is French. Whether the construction of that dulcet tongue enables the speaker to deliver profanity with more bullet-like force and precision, or to attain a greater degree of intensity than by other means, I know not; but I do know that, while curses seem useful adjuncts in any language, curses delivered in French will get a train of dogs through or over anything. For all dogs in the North it is the simplest mode of persuasion. If the dog lies down, curse him until he gets up; if he turns about in the harness, curse him until he reverts to his original position; if he looks tired, curse him until he becomes animated; and, when you grow weary of cursing him, get another man to continue the process.

As the education of the Cree, so far as regarded the French language, had seemingly been conducted with an eye single to the acquirement of anathemas, which long practice enabled him to use with such effect that the dogs instinctively dodged them as if they had been the sweep of a descending lash, our speed at first was not materially affected by the attempted haltings of the weary animals. But, as the storm increased in violence, and the swirl of powdery snow swept in their faces, the dogs turned about more frequently, and seized every opportunity of shirking. Then ensued that inhuman thrashing and varied cursing, that howling of dogs and systematic brutality of drivers, which make up the romance of winter-travel, and degrade the driver lower than the brutes. The perversion of the dog from his true use to that of a beast of burden is productive of countless forms of deception and cunning; but a life of bondage everywhere produces in the slave vices with which it is unfair to blame him. Dogs are often stubborn and provoking, and require flogging until

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brought into subjection ; but lashings upon the body while laboring in the trains, systematic floggings upon the head till their ears drop blood, beatings with whip-stocks until nose and jaws are one deep wound, and poundings with clubs and stamping with boots till their howls merge into low wails of agony, are the frequent penalties of a slight deviation from duty.

Of the four dogs attached to the provision-sledge, three underwent repeated beatings at the hands of the Cree. By mid-afternoon the head of Whiskey was reduced to a bleeding, swollen mass from tremendous thrashings. Chocolat had but one eye wherewith to watch the dreaded driver, and Brandy had wasted so much strength in wild lurches and sudden springs, in order to dodge the descending whip, that he had none remaining for the legitimate task of hauling the sledge. But one train of dogs out of the six sledges fared better, and that one was composed of animals of the Esquimaux breed. Fox-headed, long-furred, clean-legged, whose ears, sharp-pointed and erect, sprang from a head imbedded in thick tufts of woolly hair, hauling to them was as natural as to watch is natural to the watch-dog. And, of the whole race of dogs, the Esquimaux alone should be made a hauling-dog. He alone looks happy in his work, and is a good hauler ; and, although other dogs will surpass him in speed for a few days, only he can maintain a steady pace throughout a long journey, and come in fresh at its end.

IX.

AT length the violence of the storm forced us to seek the shore, and camp for the night ; and no sooner had this been accomplished, and supper over, than the Cree, fearing a continuance of the storm, summoned a driver of the packet-trains to assist in performing a solemn invocation to the Manitou to stay the tempest. Rattles made of bladders, with pebbles in them, were brought out from their limited luggage ; "medicine" belts of wolf-skin donned, and other "medicine" or magic articles, such as ermine-skins, and musk-rat skins, covered with beads and quills. Then the Cree and his companion drummed and rattled, and sang songs, finishing, after some hours, by a long speech, which they repeated together, in which they promised to give the Manitou a feast of fat meat, and to compose a new song in his praise immediately upon the cessation of the storm. After this performance they fell asleep. Long before daylight, however, I was awakened by the conjurers, who, in high glee, were cutting off tidbits of pemmican and deasting them into the fire as

the promised offering to the Manitou, at the same time chanting monotonously, and sounding their rattles. Then they engaged in feasting, and banished sleep by the persistency with which they sang the new song they pretended to have composed for the occasion, which they continued to sing over and over again without cessation until morning. As they had both been fast asleep all night, it is shrewdly suspected that they attempted to impose upon their Manitou by making shift with an old hymn, for they certainly could have had no opportunity for composing the new one promised. However this may be, the Manitou performed his part, for the storm was much abated.

At an early hour a start was again made in the usual manner — the harsh command " Marche ! " followed by deep-toned yells from the crouching dogs ; then, a merciless beating and thumping, and the cowering animals at length set off with the heavy loads, howling as if their hearts would break. After the thrashing came the abuse and curses. Coffee would be appealed to "for the love of Heaven to straighten his traces." Chocolat would be solemnly informed that he was a migratory swindle, and possessed of no character whatever. Brandy would be entreated to "just see if he couldn't do a little better ;" that he was the offspring of very disreputable parents, and would be thrashed presently. The passenger's only occupation was to keep from freezing. Vain task ! Though buried head and all in two robes and a blanket, the wind found its way through everything, and the master, sitting still in his wraps, suffered more from cold than his man who was running against the wind, and suffered, besides, under the depressing sense of his idle helplessness, while the driver felt the cheering influence of hardy toil.

Thus we journeyed on, the incidents of one day being but an iteration of that preceding. For eight days our course led from point to point of the lake's shore, upon the immense surface of which our six fleeting sledges seemed the veriest crawling insects. Nevertheless, we passed in rapid flight, at last sweeping up the rocky promontory and within the palisade of Norway House, like the ghostly stormers of the Rhenish castle. In this hospitable shelter we halted for a time, while the great Northern packet journeyed on toward the unknown land of the far North. The dogs slept quietly in their kennels ; the heathen Cree, with his hardly-earned sovereigns, arrayed himself in more intricate apparel, and stalked a green-and-yellow apparition among the squalid *tepees* of a neighboring Indian camp.

TANGLED THREADS.

I HEARD to-day a tale of Christmas-tide,
Wherein a father placed a silken clew
In children's hands ; and, like a Theseus new
By Ariadne led in paths untried,

Each sought the end : at first the threads spread wide,
Then met and tangled, but the laughing crew
Untied them, went their ways, and breathless flew

Up stairs and down, until with open-eyed
Delight they found their father's gifts concealed ;
But every child must needs to others yield

The treasure on his thread, and from the hand
Of brother take his own. Kind Fate has reeled
Our life-threads, love, and let them tangled stand :
We have each other ; need we gifts demand ?

C. M. HEWINS.

THE TOWER OF PERCEMONT.¹

BY GEORGE SAND.

IV.

HENRI slept late the next morning, and I had no leisure to talk with him. At nine o'clock my wife announced to me the arrival of the Countess de Nives. I was just getting ready to shave myself, and begged Madame Chantabel to entertain this client until I was ready.

"No," she said, "I dare not. I am not fashionable enough. This lady is so beautiful, she has so noble an air, with so magnificent a carriage and horses—ah! true English horses, a coachman who appears like a lord, a footman in livery!"

"All that dazzles you, lady of Perceмонт!"

"This is not the time to jest, M. Chantabel. What are you doing there, trying your razor a dozen times? Make haste!"

"I cannot cut my throat to please you. To-day how eager you are to see me run after this countess! Yesterday you blamed me for accepting her as a client so quickly!"

"I had not seen her. I did not think she held so high a position in the fashionable world. Well! here are your white cravat and your black coat."

"No, indeed! we are in the country; I will not appear in full dress at nine o'clock in the morning."

"Yes, yes!" cried my wife, putting on, in spite of me, the dress-cravat. "I wish you to look like what you are!"

To cut the matter short, I was obliged to yield, and I passed into my private room, where Madame de Nives awaited me.

I had never seen her excepting at a distance, and did not expect to find her still so young and beautiful. She was a woman of about forty years of age, tall, blond, and slender. Her manners were excellent. Excepting for the romance of her life, which I knew *grosso modo*, her reputation was irreproachable.

"I come, sir," she said, "to ask counsel in a very delicate affair, and you will allow me to tell you my story, of which you probably do not know the details. If I encroach upon your time—"

"My time is yours," I replied, and, having seated her in an easy-chair, I listened.

"My name is Alix Dumont. I belong to an honorable but poor family, who brought me up with the expectation of earning my own living. I was a teacher in various boarding-schools for young ladies. When I was twenty-two years old I entered the service of the Countess de Nives, as governess for her only daughter, Marie, then ten years old.

"Madame de Nives treated me with much esteem and confidence. Without her kind consideration, I could not have endured Marie's undisciplined

character and fantastic caprices. She was an unreasonable and heartless child, whom no one could restrain. This sad duty was very painful to me; and when, two years later, Madame de Nives died, commending her daughter to my care, I begged the Count de Nives to spare me a task beyond my strength: I wished to go away.

"He would not allow me to leave; he entreated, said that without me his way of living would be broken up, and his daughter abandoned to the chances of an education that he did not know how to direct. I was obliged to yield. He placed me at the head of his house; and Marie, who knew she would be obliged to enter a convent if I left, put more restraint upon herself, and begged me to remain.

"The Count de Nives, after having been a widower for a year, announced to me that he wished to marry again, and that he had chosen me for the companion of his life. I refused, on account of the child, whose aversion, I foresaw, would be always ready to burst forth; and, when he insisted, I took light, without letting him know where I went. I remained for several months with some of my old friends, who discovered my retreat, and came to entreat me once more to accept his proposal. I consented Marie to a convent. She accuses me to this day of having separated her from her father. On the contrary, I did my best to bring her back to him. The count was inflexible toward her even on his death-bed.

"Beset by a family which in spite of myself I began to share, pressed by my friends to accept the honorable offer of M. de Nives, I became his wife, and am now the mother of a daughter. Her name is Léonie; she is seven years old, and the living portrait of her father.

"I was happy, for I always cherished the hope of reconciling my husband with his elder daughter, when he met with a fall while hunting, which he survived only a few days. He left a will in which he made me Marie's guardian, conferring upon me the use of his whole income during my life; but the income is not large; M. de Nives's fortune came from his first wife. The estate that I control, and where I live with my daughter, belongs entirely to Marie, and the time approaches when this young person will demand the account of my guardianship, contrary to her father's intention, after which she will turn us out of the house."

Here Madame Alix de Nives was silent, and looked at me to find out my opinion without giving expression to her own thoughts.

"You wish to know," I said, "some means for eluding this sad necessity. There are none. By M. de Nives's will he bestowed upon you the use of all his property, relying upon your character and loyalty to provide for the wants and the establishment of

¹ This novelette began in the number of the JOURNAL for December, 1876.

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